



Monthly Report February 2010

The following is a brief summary of activity of the Prevention Coordinator and the BAY Team members in the month of February 2010.

Community:

Grant Funding

The Director and Project Manager of the BAY Team completed the grant application to continue the funding from the Drug Free Community program which currently supports a majority of the BAY Team's efforts. Attached is a copy of the work plan submitted for the upcoming year.

Marijuana Subcommittee

The BAY Team subcommittee on Marijuana is working to address youth and adult use of marijuana in the community.

On a state level, there is a Senate Commission on Marijuana exploring the possibility of decriminalizing marijuana. A state Senate leader and the group Law Enforcement Against Prohibition (LEAP) are pressing state lawmakers to decriminalize marijuana possession in Rhode Island.

Sen. Josh Miller, a local restaurant owner, heads a special legislative commission that is studying issues around marijuana prohibition and has held hearings on drug-policy reform, including decriminalization of small amounts of the drug. Miller said that Massachusetts' recent move to decriminalize marijuana, along with the argument that the policy shift would save the state money, have helped propel the debate.

Miller's panel recently took testimony from Kathleen Sullivan and Dr. Kristen Westmoreland, Director and Project Manager of the BAY Team along with BAY Team member and private therapist, Pam Lowell. All cited a number of reasons why marijuana should not be decriminalized.

The Rhode Island District Attorney's office has told Miller's panel that decriminalization would **not** save the state any money and could take leverage away from police and prosecutors in pursuit of higher-level offenders.

The Marijuana Subcommittee members sent a letter to the editor of the Projo to counterbalance the Op-Ed supportive marijuana decriminalization ("Past time to decriminalize pot", 2/9/10). See content of letter below.

The recent student survey conducted by the BAY Team in the schools found that 44% of BHS seniors admit past 30 day use of marijuana. The committee members continue to work on a toolkit for parents of 6th graders and 9th graders to offer education and prevention strategies for parents.



Youth Engagement

BAY Youth are planning a Social Norms prevention media campaign to raise awareness about the fact that only 30% on Barrington High school students report past 30 day use of alcohol. Over twenty participants attended a media workshop to work on the new "Shatter the Illusion" campaign. The group is working on a range of slogans and media plan to help convey the message that NOT all Barrington students drink.

Monthly Parenting Tips

The monthly Parenting tip for Feb focuses on parental expectations, one of the proactive prevention strategies offered to parents of the community. Parenting tips are produced electronically for all of the school newsletters. They are also published with the support of Verizon and included in the Barrington Times every month.

Schools:

Multi-Media Prevention Assembly

The Barrington High School freshman and sophomore classes attended a three-screen multi-media prevention assembly on Feb. 23rd. The event focused on a range of risky behaviors and challenged teens to make better choices. The presentation included a range of high profile celebrities, recent movie clips and current chart music in a fast paced and upbeat show.

Law Enforcement:

The BAY Team is working with the Barrington Police to organize a voluntary compliance check of all tobacco vendors in the community. Using underage youth who attempt to purchase tobacco products (with strict procedural guidelines produced by the Dept of MHRH) the BAY Team will then focus on those vendors who do not sell to the teens and offer education to those who do sell.

Drug Free Communities Grant 12 Month Action Plan
2010-11 Barrington, RI Grant Number 5 SP014840-02

DFC Goal 1: Increase Community Collaboration			
Objective 1: Change community norm that accepts youth drug use as a rite of passage			
Strategy 1: Change Physical Design			
Activity	Responsible Party/Parties	Target Date	Resources
Community Signage	Social Norms sub-committee	By June 2011	DFC grant, Local Business sponsorship
DFC Goal 1: Increase Community Collaboration			
Objective 2: Increase public awareness of Mission of the Community Prevention Coalition (The BAY Team)			
Strategy 1: Provide Support			
Activity	Responsible Party/Parties	Target Date	Resources
Letter to editor about coalition Member of the Month outlining mission and recent activities	Program Manager	Monthly	Staff
Monthly parenting tip sponsored by local business in newspaper and school newsletters	Parenting sub-committee	Monthly	Co-op ad with local business
DFC Goal 1: Increase Community Collaboration			
Objective 3: Ensure the continued functioning of the Community Coalition after the completion of the DFC grant			
Strategy 1: Policy Change			
Activity	Responsible Party/Parties	Target Date	Resources
Membership brochure and sustainability plan	Sustainability subcommittee	June 2011	DFC Funding, staff and coalition members' time, printing +postage
DFC Goal 1: Increase Community Collaboration			
Objective 4: Collect data on the four core measures			
Strategy 1: Provide Information			
Activity	Responsible Party/Parties	Target Date (By When)	Resources
<i>Barrington Risk and Protective Survey</i> of all 6 th – 12 th grade students	Program Director and Project Manager, Evaluators	March 2011	DFC Funding, staff time, Evaluators
Present Results of Youth Survey to key partners and public	Program Director, Project Manager and Evaluation Team	May 2011	Staff Time
DFC Goal 1: Increase Community Collaboration			
Objective 5: Increase community collaboration among parents of youth who socialize together			
Strategy 1: Provide Skills			
Activity	Responsible Party/Parties	Target Date	Resources
Cottage Prevention Meetings to connect parents and build skills	Parenting Subcommittee of the coalition	May 2001	Staff time, Parents to host and venue
DFC Goal 2: Reduce Youth Substance Abuse			
Objective 1: Increase perception of risk of marijuana by 5%			
Strategy 1: Enhance Access/Reduce Barriers			
Activity	Responsible Party/Parties	Target Date	Resources
Marijuana Education campaign	Marijuana Subcommittee members	June 2011	Funding for DVD production, distribution costs, in-kind donations of media spots

Strategy 2: Change Consequences			
Activity	Responsible Party/Parties	Target Date	Resources
Strengthen local ordinance in response to state legislation on marijuana	Marijuana Subcommittee members and All Coalition members	April 2011	Member's time
DFC Goal 2: Reduce Youth Substance Abuse			
Objective 2: Increase perception of risk of alcohol use by 5%			
Strategy 1: Change Policy			
Activity	Responsible Party/Parties	Target Date	Resources
Local Ordinance Change – hold parents of youth offenders accountable	Policy Subcommittee	September 2010	Staff time
Strategy 2: Build Skills			
Social Norms Campaign with School Teachers	Social Norms Subcommittee	June 2011	Staff members' time, funding for poster campaign and incentives
DFC Goal 2: Reduce Youth Substance Abuse			
Objective 3: Decrease 30 day use of prescription drug use by 5%			
Strategy 1: Change Physical Design			
Activity	Responsible Party/Parties	Target Date	Resources
Create Prescription Drug Use Committee	BAY Team members	October 2010	Staff time and members' time
Develop Prescription Drug Use educational campaign	BAY Team Prescription Drug use subcommittee members	March 2011	DFC Funding for PSAs, Drug box lock up kits, refreshments

R.I. Panel Weighs Marijuana Penalties

Friday, February 12, 2010 By Randal Edgar



Dr. Kristen Westmoreland, with the Barrington Substance Abuse Task Force, testifies Thursday before a Senate committee that is studying the possibility of decriminalizing marijuana.

PROVIDENCE — Some states have decriminalized possession of small quantities of marijuana. Others, including Rhode Island, are looking at the idea.

But even after decades of common recreational use, marijuana continues to divide people into two camps: those who think it should be decriminalized, if not made legal, and those who think it should continue to be illegal.

On Thursday afternoon, a state Senate committee that is studying the possibility of decriminalizing the drug heard distinct messages from both groups.

Some speakers, such as Peter Hannon of Providence, said it's common sense that marijuana should be legalized — and taxed.

"I am one of those people that have been arrested for marijuana numerous times," he told the Commission to Study the Prohibition of Marijuana. "I've been on probation since I was 21. I'm 53. Do I look like a criminal?"

Other speakers, such as Donald Kennedy, a retired state police trooper and executive director of the Rhode Island State Police Information Network, said legalizing or decriminalizing small quantities of marijuana would only encourage greater use and send the wrong message to young people.

"How do we, as a society, expect our kids to say no when adults around them are saying yes," Kennedy said.

Formed last year, the commission first met in November and is looking at decriminalizing marijuana against a national backdrop in which at least 12 states — California, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, Nevada, New York, North Carolina, Ohio and Oregon — have decriminalized possession of the drug to one degree or another.

The Rhode Island House of Representatives also has before it a bill, sponsored by more than 30 lawmakers, that would decriminalize the possession of less than an ounce of marijuana, making it a civil offense subject to a \$150 fine. The lead sponsor, Rep. John Edwards, has downplayed the social significance of the bill, saying it "is less about the ongoing debate over the decriminalization of marijuana" than "providing some relief" to taxpayers.

The bill and the debate come as the state faces projected deficits of \$219 million during the fiscal year that ends June 30 and more than \$400 million next year, but speakers at the hearing were sharply divided. One speaker, 23-year-old Brett Sincoski, of Charlestown, said he served three months in jail after he was arrested for having a quantity of marijuana and was unable to attend a court-ordered drug-rehabilitation program and counseling.

"At the time, I was working and I couldn't afford to miss work," he said. Jamestown resident Paul Morse, describing himself as a father of "three young adults," said he believes too many people probably smoke too much marijuana, but he said making it a criminal offense and leaving people with criminal records is unfair and can hurt them years later as they apply for jobs. He also questioned the expense.

"As a taxpayer, I personally don't want to see another dime spent ... incarcerating people who want to smoke marijuana," he said.

But for every speaker who wanted to relax the laws, another said it would be a mistake.

Kristen Westmoreland, of the Barrington Substance Abuse Task Force, said smoking marijuana can be especially harmful to adolescents, affecting them emotionally and harming their ability to learn. She also cited studies that suggest more young people will smoke it if it is decriminalized.

“As the perception of the risk of harm goes down, adolescent use goes up,” she said.

The group will meet again on March 4, said Sen. Joshua Miller, D-Cranston, commission chairman.

Providence Journal
Letter to the Editor
2/9/10

The recent editorial supporting proposed RI legislation to decriminalize marijuana (“Past time to decriminalize pot”, 2/9/10) trivializes the societal costs such a move would have on our state’s youth.

While recognizing correctly that marijuana use is harmful to anybody and especially to developing bodies, the editorial states that arresting and jailing people for small amounts is not the answer to the US war on drugs. In fact, youths addicted to marijuana often come to treatment as a result of their arrest. Prior to arrest, denial and access can make treatment elusive. While criminal justice reform may be an option here, making marijuana possession a civil matter sends a clear message to the state’s youth that marijuana use is acceptable. This is counter-productive to proven prevention tactics.

Enforcement works as a powerful deterrent to prevent youth from initiating marijuana use. As the perception of marijuana’s risk of harm decreases, use of marijuana amongst our youth will increase. Nationwide, we are already seeing this phenomenon in action as other states have decriminalized marijuana. Weakening the prevention message by supporting this legislation will create more youth users in RI.

Marijuana is classified as a Schedule 1 drug because it has high potential for abuse. Smoking marijuana is as hazardous, if not more so, as smoking tobacco in terms of lung disease and cancer. Smoking marijuana has the additional detrimental effects of diminished reaction time, coordination, motivation, and risk of car crash and other injury.

We do not want marijuana smoking to become as ubiquitous as speeding. Do not take a powerful prevention tool from this state. The cost to our youth will far outweigh any questionable short-term savings.

Signed

Prevention Coordinators and Directors of the Substance Abuse Prevention Task Forces representing Barrington, Bristol, Charlestown, Coventry, Cumberland, Exeter, Hopkinton, Middletown, Narragansett, Newport, Richmond, West Greenwich, and Warren



A Drug Free Community coalition of:

Parents, youth, schools, law, healthcare, youth serving organizations, business, religious representatives, volunteers, local agents, media, and others